



March is Procurement Month!

How are you celebrating?

We here at the Division of Procurement Services want to take a moment to celebrate all procurement professionals

across South Carolina during the month of March. What you do every day makes such a difference in our communities. Tell us what you're doing to share your value with stakeholders this month. Document your Procurement Month celebrations if you're marking the occasion and send us pictures to dps@sfaa.sc.gov. Be sure to include your agency information and information about your celebration. All submissions should be sent by March 15. We'll highlight your celebrations in the March edition of DisPatcheS!

Here are some groups marking Procurement Month in their own way. Click any banner to read their take on the importance of professional procurement operations:





Dental Contracts Updates (Correction)

Last month we incorrectly identified Darby Dental as having a contract with the State and they do NOT. Below is the corrected information about the dental products contracts.

Henry Schein (4400023352) – Expires 4/05/2025.

~~Darby Dental~~ **Dental Health Products** (4400036374) – Expires 12/31/2029.

Patterson Dental (4400036375) – Expires 12/31/2029.

We'll update the Henry Schein contract later this year. All three contracts now appear on our website.

ULSD & Biodiesel Fuel Contract (Update)

The ULSD portion of these contracts are extended to June 30, 2025 while we resolicit for the next contract.

Drug & Alcohol Price Update

The State granted a price increase for some of the pricing on the subject contract. The last price increase was back in January 2023, so this request was not a surprise and was in compliance with the contract terms. The new pricing is reflected on the website. Also, MMCAP is in the process of reviewing offers received for the next contract. Once those are awarded, we'll evaluate the awarded offers to determine which contract is the best fit for South Carolina. The current contract does not expire until July 31, 2025.

Substitute Teachers Added to Temporary Personnel Contract

We have added both certified and non-certified substitute teacher positions to the new solicitation for temporary personnel services. This solicitation is currently on the street and the bid opening is scheduled for March 20, 2025.

The Monthly Statewide Term Contract Town Hall

The next Town Hall will be March 18, 2025, at 10:00 AM.

The Town Hall is a little later this month due to attendance at a conference and some scheduling issues.

If there is a contract you would like for us to highlight at a future Town Hall, please let us know. **YOU** can certainly help set the agenda for the meeting by emailing any specific questions you may have a few days before the meeting. We didn't receive any questions or requests via email last month, but we wanted to remind you that it is always an option. Email your questions ahead of time to one of the following people:

G&S Questions – mspeakmon@mmo.sc.gov

IT Questions – rbarr@mmo.sc.gov

We've been having issues with different links so the only link to the Town Hall will be on the Dispatches webpage on our website at this location. <https://procurement.sc.gov/dispatches>
We look forward to seeing you soon!

Market Research and Agency Input Requests for NEW State Term Contracts (STCs)

The Office of State Procurement (OSP) seeks input on the following recommendations for new State Term Contracts (STCs). If you have any information you can share, please contact the appropriate procurement manager. Our goal is to put contracts in place that will meet your needs, but we need your input to ensure success.

Google Services – We are looking at potentially soliciting this platform as a new State Term Contract. Please let us know if you're a current or a potential user of this service. Any information you feel that would assist us in making this determination would be helpful. If you use it, how do you solicit? What is your pricing? Are you willing to share your negotiated agreements with us for reference? Please provide your information to Randy Barr at rbarr@mmo.sc.gov no later than March 17, 2025.

KnowBe4 Security Awareness Training – We're potentially soliciting this platform as a new State Term Contract. Please let us know if you're a current or a potential user of this service. Any information you feel would assist us in making this determination would be helpful. If you use it, how did you solicit? What is your pricing? Do you use something similar? Please provide your information to Clifton Sanders at cdsanders@mmo.sc.gov.

Incident Response and Penetration Testing – We are working to establish a New State Term Contract for Incident Response and Penetration Testing. The anticipated publish date is in March. However, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact Yolanda Cohen at ycohen@mmo.sc.gov. If you're a potential user of Incident Response and Penetration Testing services, we'd love to hear from you to ensure the new state term contract will effectively meet your needs.

Market Research and Agency Input Requests for existing State Term Contracts

Electronic Equipment Recycling (Expires 1/31/2026) – Michael Speakmon (mspeakmon@mmo.sc.gov) is just beginning his market research into the next solicitation and any information you have concerning the contract would be very helpful.

Lightbars – Law Enforcement, EMS & Fire Department (Expires 2/8/2026) – DeAna Reed-Sharpe (drsharpe@mmo.sc.gov) is beginning her market research on this one, but since we did this last, NASPO contracts for these products. Many of the brands that we have are on the NASPO contract. Here is a link to the NASPO contract page:

<https://www.naspo.valuepoint.org/portfolio/public-safety-vehicle-access-led-light-bars-sirens-warning-accessories-2019-2025/>

Please get this link to the people using the contract and ask them to do a comparison and give DeAna their thoughts on the pros and cons of participating in the NASPO contract compared to using our own. Be advised that the existing NASPO contracts expire February 28, 2025 and NASPO is evaluating offers now.

14 Passenger Mini-Buses (Expires 2/21/2026) – Ginger Hardee (gghardee@mmo.sc.gov) will be working with the supplier community and SCDE to finalize the specifications on these buses. Please contact her if you have any special requirements that we need to consider during that process.

DID YOU KNOW... Because of Jacob's Law the contracts for 14-passenger mini-buses are open to NON-GOVERNMENT entities in South Carolina? Jacob's Law says that any entity, **public or**

private, transporting school age children to and from public or private school, daycare facilities and churches must use this type of vehicle. So, tell your churches and daycare facilities that these contracts are available to them and to contact Ginger Hardee if they have any questions.

Extreme (Expires 03/26/2026) – We anticipate publishing this solicitation in October 2025 with an anticipated award date of January 2026. If there are changes that could be made to the existing scope of work so the new contract would better meet your needs, please provide feedback to Clifton Sanders at [cgsanders@mmo.sc.gov](mailto:cdsanders@mmo.sc.gov).

Juniper (Expires 05/31/2026) – We anticipate publishing this solicitation in December 2025 with an anticipated award date of March 2026. If there are changes that could be made to the existing scope of work so the new contract would better meet your needs, please provide feedback to Clifton Sanders at cgsanders@mmo.sc.gov.

Digital Transaction Management – We anticipate publishing this solicitation in July with an anticipated award date of November 2025. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Stephen Taylor at staylor@mmo.sc.gov. If you're a current user of the Digital Transaction Management contract, we'd love to hear from you to ensure the new state term contract will effectively meet your needs.

Cloud Computing Services – We anticipate publishing this solicitation in March with an anticipated award date of October 2025. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Stephen Taylor at staylor@mmo.sc.gov. If you're a current user of Cloud Computing Services, we'd love to hear from you to ensure the new state term contract will effectively meet your needs.

SAP Public Services (Expires 07/27/2025) – We anticipate publishing this sole source late March or April of 2025. If there are changes that could be made to the existing contract so the new contract would better meet your needs, please provide feedback to Lillanea Bouknight at lbouknight@mmo.sc.gov.

Security Software Products & Services (Quest One Software and Hardware) (Expires 11/29/2025) – We anticipate publishing this solicitation in July with an anticipated award date of September. If you're currently utilizing this contract, we invite you to share your experiences and highlight what aspects have been successful. For those who have not used the contract due to unmet needs, we welcome your feedback on how we can enhance the new solicitation to better suit your requirements. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Lillanea Bouknight, at lbouknight@mmo.sc.gov.

Feedback Request

Digital Fingerprinting Services & CWP System – If you're a current user of the Digital Fingerprint Services and CWP System, we'd love to hear from you to ensure that the existing contract with *Idemia Identity & Security USA LLC* is currently operating at an acceptable level. If you have any feedback on recent contract performance or other questions or concerns, please contact Stephen Taylor at staylor@mmo.sc.gov.

Currently Published Solicitations

Sandbags (5400027759) – Portia Davis (pdavis@mmo.sc.gov) published this solicitation February 10, 2025. The pre-bid is scheduled for February 24, 2025 and the bid opening date is scheduled for March 14, 2025.

Temporary Personnel Staffing (5400027395) – Portia Davis (pdavis@mmo.sc.gov) published the solicitation on February 3, 2025. The pre-bid was scheduled for February 18, 2025 and the bid opening date is scheduled for March 20, 2025.

Dynamics Managed Service Provider (5400027791) – This Solicitation was published December 23, 2024 with an anticipated award date of May 2025. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Randy Barr at rbarr@mmo.sc.gov

Rubrik Products and Services (5400027842) – This solicitation was published January 16, 2025. The anticipated award date is March 21, 2025. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Yolanda Cohen at ycohen@mmo.sc.gov

Oracle Software and Support (Solicitation 5400027875) – This solicitation was published as an

RFP January 30, 2025 with an anticipated award date of March 11, 2025. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Stephen Taylor at staylor@mmo.sc.gov.

Disaster Recovery Planning Software (Solicitation 5400027138) – This solicitation was published August 2, 2024, with an anticipated award date in mid-March 2025. The solicitation remains in the evaluation process. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Stephen Taylor at staylor@mmo.sc.gov.

IT Service Management (5400027376) – (Formerly known as Service Now). This solicitation was published October 4 and opened on December 20. The solicitation is currently under evaluation with an anticipated award date in April 2025. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Clifton Sanders at [cgsanders@mmo.sc.gov](mailto:cdsanders@mmo.sc.gov).

Newly Awarded State Term Contracts

Telematics (5400026434) – Michael Speakmon (mspeakmon@mmo.sc.gov) posted the new Intent to Award on February 11, 2025 and, barring a protest, the contract will be effective February 22, 2025.

Remanufactured Toner Cartridges (5400027356) – Ginger Hardee (gghardee@mmo.sc.gov) published the Intent to Award November 20, 2024 and received multiple protests. The contracts remain suspended until the process has run its course.

Vendor Manager (5400025468) – The Intent to Award was posted February 18, 2025 and pending no protest, it will be effective February 28. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Randy Barr at rbarr@mmo.sc.gov.



The following Division of Procurement Services courses are available for registration in SCOPES:

Procurement Ethics

This course is designed to be a comprehensive overview of how Ethics apply to the procurement function.

Date: Thursday, March 13

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location:

Division of Procurement Services

1201 Main St. Ste. 600

Columbia, SC 29201

Cost: \$100

Specifications and Scopes of Work

Specifications and scopes of work are vital to any solicitation because they will form the basis of the eventual contract. This course defines the procurement officer's role in developing and writing specifications and scopes of work and tips and tricks for ensuring success.

Date: Thursday, March 20

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location:

Capitol Center Mezzanine Conference Room

1201 Main St.

Columbia, SC 2901

Cost: \$100

Acquisition Planning and Market Research

This course is designed to give a comprehensive overview of the acquisition planning and market research process as required by the SC Procurement Code and Regulations.

Date: Friday, March 21 or Friday, April 25

Time: 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Location:

online

Cost: \$75

Invitation for Bids

Competitive sealed bidding, also known as invitation for bids, is the preferred acquisition method per the South Carolina Procurement Code. This course is designed to help participants gain a better understanding of the IFB process from development through award.

Date: Wednesday, March 26

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location:

Division of Procurement Services

1201 Main St. Ste. 600

Columbia, SC 29201

Cost: \$100

RFP

This two-day course provides participants with a time-tested methodology to complete RFPs in compliance with the SC Consolidated Procurement Code. A guideline document, which fully describes the above stated methodology is included.

Note: Participants must attend both days of training as they are scheduled to receive credit for the course.

Date: Tuesday, April 8 – Wednesday, April 9

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location:

Division of Procurement Services
1201 Main St. Ste. 600
Columbia, SC 29201

Cost: \$200

Contract Administration

This 2-day course provides the guidelines for a standardized approach to establish and administer a contract administration program for South Carolina governmental entities. While this course was developed for state agency Procurement Officers, the course materials can be applied by anyone in governmental procurement.

Note: Participants must attend both days of training as they are scheduled to receive credit for the course.

Date: Tuesday, April 15 – Wednesday, April 16

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location:

Division of Procurement Services
1201 Main St. Ste. 600
Columbia, SC 29201

Cost: \$200

Introduction to the SC Procurement Code

This Full-day course focuses on demystifying the code and identifying the requirements most Procurement Officers need to know. Attendance will serve as a foundation for other course and will benefit Procurement Officers and other agency officials who authorize, process, or review procurements. While this course is designed for state agencies, any public procurement official would benefit from hearing information necessary to properly document procurement files.

Date: Tuesday, April 22

Time: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location:

Division of Procurement Services
1201 Main St. Ste. 600
Columbia, SC 29201

Cost: \$100

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more about these classes and the SCOPES Learning Management System (LMS)



SCPro eProcurement Project Enters New Testing Phase

The SCPro project is now planning for the User Acceptance Testing (UAT) phase for SCPro. UAT is important to the successful implementation of SCPro by testing the procurement functionality of SCPro to ensure that our final product aligns with our state procurement user community expectations and meets all necessary requirements. The testers for UAT were selected from the pilot group of agencies who assisted with the design of SCPro. Below is a high-level summary for UAT.

I. PURPOSE OF UAT

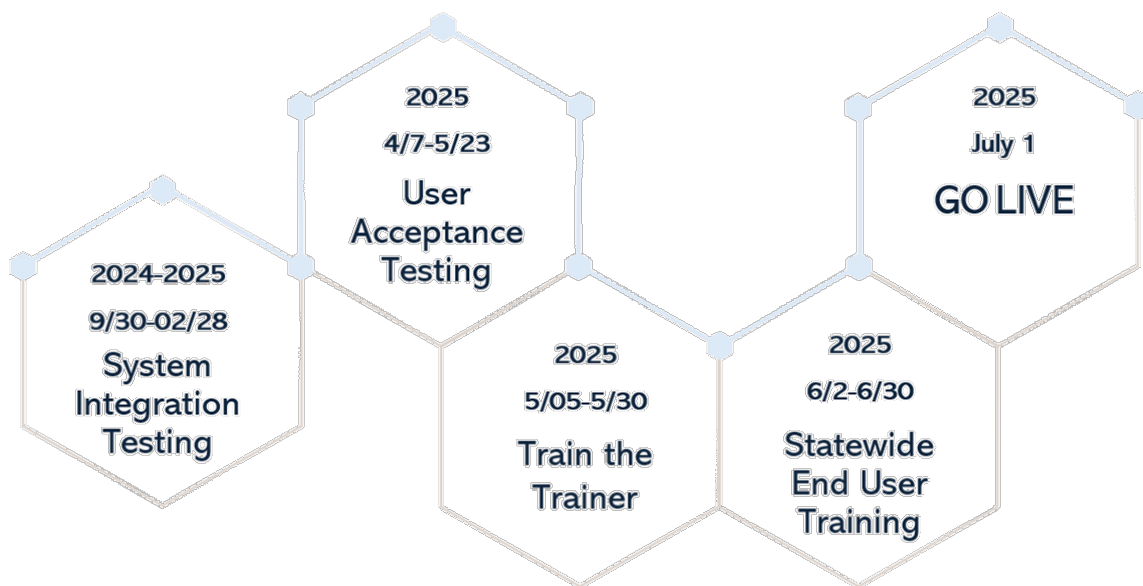
The primary purpose and goal of UAT is to validate that SCPro functions as intended in a near real-world production environment. Your participation as a SCPro UAT Tester will help us identify any issues and confirm that SCPro meets and/or exceeds our state procurements needs and expectations.

II. UAT PREPARATION

UAT Testers will be provided UAT Test Plan and Test Cases to review in preparation for SCPro UAT. Testers will also participate in UAT readiness Kickoff meeting and UAT Test Case review meeting to ensure all UAT Testers will be ready to begin UAT testing on April 7.

III. UAT TEST SCHEDULE AND LOCATION

UAT is currently scheduled to begin 4/7/2025 – 05/23/2025. All UAT Testers will be provided a testing schedule to know the exact test dates, test time, and test location(SFAA and/or Admin) they will be required to be available for testing during the period of 4/7 – 5/23.



What Can I Do in Wave 1



Wave 1 Agencies

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES
ARTS COMMISSION
ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE
COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
COMMISSION ON INDIGENT DEFENSE
COMMISSION ON MINORITY AFFAIRS
CONFED RELIC RM AND MIL COMM
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE
DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE
DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT ON AGING
DEPT OF ALCOHOL&DRUG ABUSE SVC
DEPT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
DEPT OF CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY
DEPT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
DEPT OF DISABLE&SPECIAL NEEDS
DEPT OF HEALTH AND ENV CONTROL
DEPT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SVCS
DEPT OF PARKS, REC AND TOURISM
EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION COMM
ELECTION COMMISSION
ETHICS COMMISSION
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONAL BOARD
FORESTRY COMMISSION
GOV SCH FOR ARTS & HUMANITIES
GOV SCH FOR SCIENCE & MATH
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - INSPECTOR GENERAL
GOVERNOR'S OFF-SLED
HIGHER EDUCATION TUITION GRANT
HOUSING AUTHORITY
HUMAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION
JOHN DE LA HOWE SCHOOL

JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT
LABOR LICENSE & REGULATION
MUSEUM COMMISSION
OFFICE OF RESILIENCE
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
OFFICE OF THE REGULATORY STAFF
OFFICE OF THE STATE TREASURER
PATRIOT'S POINT
PROCUREMENT REVIEW PANEL
PUBLIC EMPLOYEE BENEFIT AUTHORITY
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
RETIREMENT SYS INVESTMENT COMM
REVENUE AND FISCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE
RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE AUTHORITY
SC CONSERVATION BANK
SC AERONAUTICS
SC COMM ON PROSECUTION COORDI
SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND
SEA GRANT CONSORTIUM
SECRETARY OF STATE
STATE ACCIDENT FUND
STATE AUDITOR OFFICE
STATE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AUTHORITY
STATE LIBRARY
TEC & COMPREHENSIVE EDUC BOARD
WILL LOU GRAY OPPORTUNITY SCH
WORKERS COMPENSATION



A Mission Across the Pond

By Delbert Singleton, Division Director

This past July 14-19, 2024, Stacy Adams, Deputy Chief Procurement Officer, and I were part of a delegation from South Carolina (the State) that journeyed to England as part of the State's strategic initiative to strengthen economic and trade relations with the United Kingdom (UK). The State delegation was led by the South Carolina Department of Commerce (Commerce) and included public agencies and private sector organizations as well. In addition to Commerce, other entities represented on the mission trip included the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW), the South Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT), the University of South Carolina (USC), Clemson University (CU) (International Center for Automotive Research (ICAR)), SC BIO (a South Carolina life sciences firm), SC Competes (a South Carolina firm that drives the State's long-term economic growth by managing the State's industry clusters and providing the research, network, and resources that are required for industry clusters to thrive), and the State Fiscal Accountability Authority's Division of Procurement Services (DPS). The delegation made stops in London, Leeds, and Liverpool meeting and collaborating with UK

and local government officials, research institutions, and various UK private sector firms. We also had a very insightful tour of the Hartree Centre Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) Laboratory.

The genesis of the UK mission trip stems from a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation and Trade Relations between the State and the UK. The MOU was signed by Governor Henry McMaster and the Right Honorable Greg Hands, Minister of State for Trade Policy United Kingdom for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, on December 7, 2022. As shared by Commerce in its MOU Mission Booklet, “[t]he MOU reflects a commitment to building a robust bilateral relationship, leveraging shared strengths, and creating opportunities for growth and development in both regions.” Key points of the MOU include:

1. **Economic Cooperation**: Enhancing collaboration in areas such as manufacturing, technology, and innovation. Both parties aim to foster business relationships and facilitate trade and investment opportunities.
2. **Trade and Investment**: Promoting mutual trade and investment, with a focus on sectors where both the State and the UK have strong capabilities, including automotive, aerospace, and life sciences.
3. **Educational and Cultural Exchange**: Encouraging partnerships between educational institutions and promoting cultural exchanges to deepen mutual understanding and cooperation.
4. **Sustainable Development**: Collaborating on initiatives related to sustainability and clean energy, reflecting both parties' commitment to addressing environmental challenges.
5. **Support for SMEs**: Providing support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enter and expand in each other's markets, fostering innovation and economic growth at the local level.

Led by Commerce in conjunction with its State partners, the mission trip was more than a year in the making with a Herculean effort that spanned two continents, an ocean, numerous Zoom meetings, and countless hours of planning and collaboration. Within months of Governor McMaster signing the MOU, DPS, in March 2023, was asked to become part of the South Carolina working group that was formed by Commerce to effectuate the MOU. Commerce worked with the UK leadership team to plan for an initial, educational conversation to better understand how the UK and the State could take advantage of their synergies to include a focus in the areas (or sectors as the Brits refer to them) of automotive, electric vehicles (EV), infrastructure (National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Formula Program), life sciences/R&D, sustainability, and procurement (understanding how to do business with South Carolina).

An initial meeting of the UK and the State working groups was held June 16, 2023, at the University of South Carolina Alumni Center. Commerce hosted the event with representatives from the UK Consulate General and Department of International Trade in attendance. Working group members from Commerce, CU-ICAR, USC, DOT, SC BIO, the Medical University of South Carolina, and DPS. Presentations and discussions focused on three sectors: automotive, life sciences, and procurement. Robust, engaging, and contemplative discussions were had that looked at opportunities, strengths, and interests in the respective sectors. Particularly with regard to the procurement sector, Stacy and I presented an overview of the South Carolina public procurement process, its governance structure, and how international vendors might engage in doing business with the State. This meeting was a significant move forward in advancing the aims of the MOU to address trade barriers; build new commercial relationships, provide reciprocal access to each country's government procurement markets, explore new opportunities for inward and outward investment, and grow trans-Atlantic trade.

The succeeding months leading to the mission trip saw us engaged in a flurry of meetings (thank you Teams and Zoom) to provide better understanding of what DPS does and how UK vendors might participate in our market space. Specifically, our continued discussion with our UK partners centered on the exchange of best practices regarding procurement methods that included the UK's social value approach and various training and collaborative opportunities. We also talked through potential opportunities where the UK's expertise might be beneficial to the State. Those areas of interest ranged from EV charging infrastructure to professional services.

However, there was one significant hurdle to overcome. While we wanted to share information about the State's procurement market, contracts we have in place, and training on how to do business with the State through our website with UK government officials and vendors, they were blocked from having access to our website. As it turned out, our cybersecurity protocols prevented our target in the UK from gaining access to our website because their IPs (Internet Protocol address) for the Geofence were outside of our parameters (you'll definitely have to talk to Mike Allinger about all that stuff). Speaking of Mike Allinger, after working with Commerce and much research, Mike was able to securely open our website to our partners across the pond. Thanks Mike!!!

Preparation for the mission trip amped up from March until our flight date. Stacy and I participated in

several planning sessions with government officials from the UK and London, Leeds, and Liverpool to coordinate and customize our presentation for each location. In late May, as a precursor to the mission trip, I, along with my counterpart from the State of Washington, did a virtual presentation to the UK Export Academy about contracting at the state government level. This was time well spent as it gave UK vendors the opportunity to evaluate their interest and potential ability to participate in government contracting in the State and the United States. It is noteworthy that a couple of the vendors attended the local events in July.

Sunday, July 14

Our touchdown in London on Sunday, July 13, 2024, was met with cool temperatures, cloudy and overcast skies, and light drizzly weather. And of course, what's international travel without someone in the group having to deal with the recovery of lost (really delayed) luggage that apparently took a later flight. Our early arrival afforded us the opportunity to regroup and refresh from the overnight travel and prepare for Monday's meetings with UK officials. And of course we were able to get a little sightseeing done, although a bit hurried. (By the way, hop-on, hop-off buses are a marvelous invention.)

Monday, July 15—London

Our schedule of events for the mission trip kicked off July 15 at the Old Admiralty Building in London with our counterparts from the UK and a few private sector attendees. After introductions and an update on the progress of the MOU from Deputy Secretary of Commerce Ashely Teasdel and our UK counterparts, we broke into groups for industry sector roundtable discussions. Sector discussions included the areas of life sciences, advanced manufacturing, academia and research, and transportation infrastructure projects and procurement.

Stacy and I paired with Rob Bedenbaugh DOT's Director of Engineering Support for the transportation infrastructure projects and procurement roundtable discussion. Rob's presentation on "Transportation Opportunities in South Carolina" fueled the discussion for transportation infrastructure in both South Carolina and the UK. Rob spoke on the current state of South Carolina's transportation infrastructure and projects planned over the next several years to enhance the State's transportation system. It was interesting to learn from our UK counterparts the efforts and progress they have made in this area as well. And of course, Stacy and I, along with Rob, touched upon how procurement inter-plays with transportation projects. Given that the private sector attendees were not familiar with South Carolina procurement practices, Stacy and I were able to provide a general overview of our process for them. I think it is fair to say that we left London with a keen sense that although separated by the Atlantic Ocean, we and our UK counterparts have common interests, challenges, and concerns.

Tuesday, July 16—West Yorkshire and Leeds

The next stop on our tour of cites was West Yorkshire and Leeds. West Yorkshire, with Leeds as its economic capital, is a vibrant and diverse region in northern England. Known for its historical significance in the textile industry, the region has evolved into a major center for finance and professional services, digital and technological innovation, healthcare and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and education. Leeds is one of England's most populous cities (ranked fifth) with an estimated population of 812,000.

Greetings were extended to our delegation from the Mayor of West Yorkshire. As in London, we separated into different sectors of interest. This go around Stacy and I were paired primarily with private sector attendees who were interested in learning how to do business with South Carolina and identifying contracting opportunities. We conducted two sessions providing attendees with guidance on how to maneuver in our procurement space, information on how to register to do business, strategies on how to pursue contracting opportunities, and insight on what is expected of our contractors. We were impressed to learn that some of the attendees already had connections in the U.S. or were contemplating establishing such connections.

Wednesday, July 17—Liverpool

The third leg of our travels took us to the home of the Beatles—Liverpool. The City of Liverpool (Liverpool region), located in the northwest of England, boasts a diverse and dynamic economy. Historically known for its maritime industry, the region has undergone significant transformation and diversification, positioning itself as a key economic hub in the UK. Liverpool's economic engines also consist of digital and creative industries, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals and healthcare, and higher education and research. Liverpool is noted as England's fourth largest city with an area population over 830,000.

We were hosted by Liverpool City Region officials at the Liverpool Science Park, The Manufacturing Technology Centre. Our mission in Liverpool was the same as Leeds, introduce South Carolina to U.K. businesses and the potential for them to engage in becoming “partners” with South Carolina for the delivery of goods and services. We outlined for them the process to become a vendor, what it means to do business with South Carolina, and contracting opportunities that were available.

This was by far our largest and most engaged group of attendees (over 30). As an example of the level of engagement and attention given by attendees, one of them asked a question (which was probably one others wanted to ask): “Why were we really there?” Her question was genuine and honest. She wanted to know our “why” and if she was chasing the wind or truly investing her time wisely. I believe our response assured her, and the other attendees, that we were not there just to check a box, but that we are sincerely committed to opening the South Carolina marketplace to allow them opportunity to tap into the same.

As in Leeds, a few of the attendees already had some established connections in the States. Some of them were able to share their experience participating in or collaboration with other in the U.S. market. Our session in Liverpool resulted in a few follow-ups once we returned home. The hope is that the engagement will continue.

Thursday, July 18

The last leg of our trip took us to the Hartree Centre STFC Laboratory in Daresbury Warrington, UK. The Centre’s website states that it “helps UK businesses and organizations of any size to explore and adopt supercomputing, data science and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies for enhanced productivity, smarter innovation and economic growth....[T]he Hartree Centre is home to some of the most advanced digital technologies and experts in the UK.” The Centre is touted as “one of Europe’s largest multi-disciplinary scientific research organizations—within UK Research and Innovation, building on a wealth of established scientific heritage and a network of international expertise.”

I can truly say that the Centre lived up to its billing. The Centre’s collaborative partnership with industry, startups, large corporations, and public sector entities was on full display. Most impressive was the collaborative work the Centre is doing to enable businesses to acquire the skills, knowledge and technical capability required to adopt digital technologies like supercomputing, data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI) and quantum computing. Their demonstration of what they are doing in the area of AI and quantum computing was mind bending. Our tour of the different technology businesses and organizations that are collocated on the campus demonstrated how this collaborative promotes an environment conducive for assisting businesses and public sector organization develop and adopt innovative new digital technologies to enhance productivity and expand into new markets.

Concluding Thoughts

The mission trip (preparation, planning, and execution) gave us a greater appreciation for what Commerce does in expanding South Carolina’s economic and trade footprint in other parts of the world. No matter what side of the Atlantic we live on, our interests and challenges are similar, and in many instances the same, in meeting private and public sector needs. One thing is certain, public procurement is a much-needed partner as the State looks to build robust relationships with the UK and other markets, foster innovation, and strengthen economic growth.

I am certain that Stacy will agree that our mission was fruitful. We had a number follow up contacts with attendees and UK officials. In fact, we hope to face-to-face meetings with our UK partners soon.

THANK YOU to the South Carolina Department of Commerce for including the Division of Procurement Services as a member of the South Carolina delegation in furtherance of the Memorandum of Understanding between South Carolina and the United Kingdom.



With UK reps and attendees.

Rob Bedenbaugh is pictured centered behind Stacy and me





Liverpool: Someone told us that the Beatles were near the Port. They did have much to say when we found them. Carla Edwards with Commerce is pictured with us
